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FLASHBACK

Washington County Historical Society
Preserving the Past for the Future
Volume 53 **Spring 2003** **Number 2**

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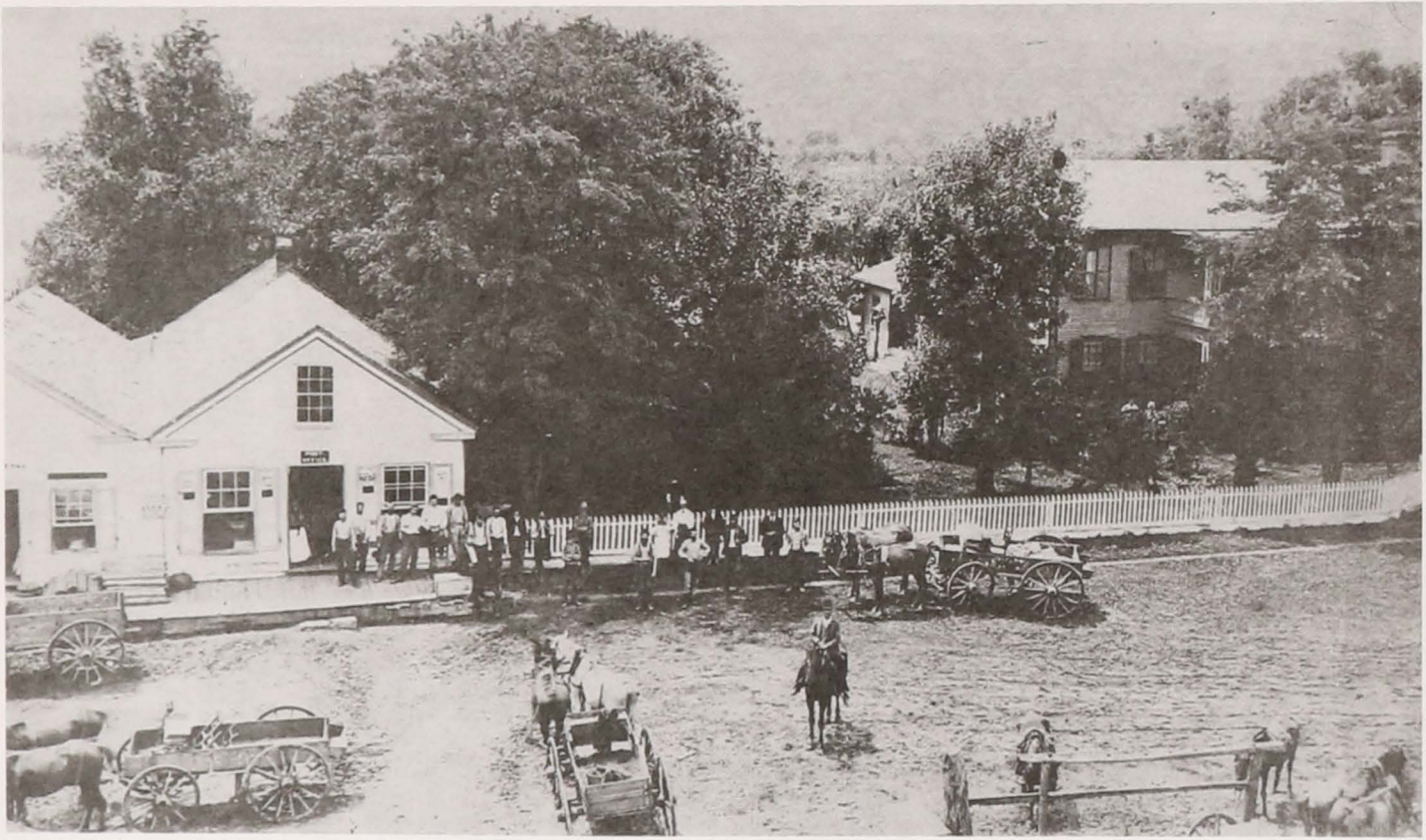

Taken from the top floor of the mill at Rhea's Mill, Washington County. Home on right is the Rhea mansion, circa 1901 (Courtesy Rebecca Rhea).

THE PRAIRIE GROVE VALLEY AND ITS COMMUNITIES
PART TWO

WILLARD B. GATEWOOD

Regardless of what uncertainty existed about the route of the east-west rail line, Prairie Grove triumphed for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the support it had from J. H. McIlroy, an influential Fayetteville banker, who allegedly was interested in "tapping the [wealth of the] great valley of the Illinois River and the timber beyond." The Ozark and Cherokee Central Railroad (OCC) was organized, and construction began on a rail line running westward from Fayetteville roughly along present-day Highway 62. Completed in 1901, it ran through Farmington, Prairie Grove, and the small settlements of Lincoln and Summers; crossing into the Indian Territory, it intersected the north-south Kansas City Southern Railway at Westville before terminating in Okmulgee. The Ozark and Cherokee Central made rail service accessible to many, but certainly not all, agricultural communities in the Prairie Grove Valley. Sometime prior to1928 the Frisco acquired the OCC and operated it until 1942 when it was abruptly closed and its rails quickly removed.

During the more than forty years of its existence, the OCC became a key to the economic welfare of the Prairie Grove Valley and especially the town of Prairie Grove. The arrival of the railroad not only made the transportation of traditional products such as grain, livestock, and hogs less risky and more profitable,it

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also provided speedier transportation for the products of Prairie Grove's processing plants and canneries and made possible the shipment of fresh fruits, vegetables, and other perishables to distant markets.

Hundreds of train loads of apples were shipped out of Prairie Grove each year. Beginning early in its history, Washington County had possessed orchards, but the fruit was used primarily for domestic or home consumption. Later, apples and other fruits processed at evaporating plants and canneries were exported. The commercial importance of apples increased rapidly with the penetration of the railroad into the Prairie Grove Valley. In 1913 the United States Department of Agriculture noted that a remarkably large number of apple varieties of commercial importance had been developed in Washington County. In fact, the apple was a major source of employment in the county until the decline of apple growing there in the 1920s. Nowhere was this more evident than in apple sheds and processing plants in Prairie Grove. As impressive as was the "Ozark Apple Empire," trains leaving Prairie Grove were also laden with other locally produced cargo, notably grain and grain products, livestock, hogs, and strawberries. Older residents of the town remembered seeing entire trains loaded with fresh strawberries leaving the Prairie Grove depot.

The new era in the town inaugurated by the railroad witnessed the establishment of financial institutions to accommodate the shift in the local economy. The leading citizens of the town by the name of Edmiston, Baggett, Collier, Mock, Parks, McCormick, and Bartholomew sought to provide the town and the area with banks. Creating stable and sound banks in the era involved overcoming a legacy bequeathed by a banking fiasco that occurred early in the state's history. In 1836, the year in which Arkansas became a state, the legislature created two banks, the Arkansas State Bank and the Real Estate Bank, both of which

ultimately failed as a result of mismanagement and perhaps fraud. The popular distrust of banking institutions lingered for several generations. Furthermore, there were no general incorporation laws under which banks could be incorporated until 1882. They could be incorporated by special acts of the legislature, but none did so. As a result, merchants functioned as special deposit and exchange agents and assumed functions usually associated with banking. Private banks did exist, of course, and slowly began to take advantage of the general incorporation law once it was passed. For example, William Wilson of the Viney Grove community used the services of a private bank in Little Rock for many years. At the turn of the century the nearest banks to Prairie Grove and indeed most of western Washington County were those located in Fayetteville, notably McIlroy Bank, "the oldest bank in Arkansas," and the Bank of Fayetteville established in 1888.

The first bank in Prairie Grove, the Bank of Prairie Grove, opened in 1901 with J. S. Edmiston as president. It was probably no coincidence that the town's first bank appeared in the same year as the arrival of the railroad. The second bank organized in the town was the Home Bank, which opened in 1904. It changed its name to Farmers State Bank in 1913. The town's third bank was the First National Bank, which opened in 1905. In the same year it purchased the Bank of Prairie Grove. A fourth bank, Citizens Bank, opened in 1912 and merged with the First National Bank in 1929, a merger that was accompanied by a new name, Farmers and Merchants Bank. It is interesting to note that between August 1912 and August 1914 Prairie Grove had three banks in operation. In the year 2001 the town had one bank and a branch bank, neither of which is locally owned.

Other developments designed to modernize services available to Prairie Grove residents accompanied the town's growth and economic expansion. For example, in 1888 Dr. E. G. McCormick strung a telephone line from his office to the pharmacy owned by

his brother. Later in the year McCormick, with the help of James McIlroy of Fayetteville, established a telephone line between Prairie Grove and Fayetteville. In 1906 McCormick, his brother William, and M. M. Collier incorporated the Prairie Grove Telephone Company . McCormick's son-in-law, James C. Parks, was largely responsible for extending the company's lines throughout much of western Arkansas, thereby replacing local companies that existed in various villages. Since his death in 1956, his twin sons, Barry and Donald Parks, have regularly updated the company's equipment and dramatically expanded the area in which the company provided telephone service. By the twenty-first century the Prairie Grove Telephone Company was "the largest family-owned and operated telephone company in Arkansas."

All the while, Prairie Grove acquired other services that kept it abreast of developments elsewhere in the region and nation. In 1915 J. H. Zellner and other citizens organized the Prairie Grove Electric Company to provide electric power to the town. Initially the company provided service only for limited hours at night, but later residents had twenty-four-hour electric service. In 1925 The Southwest Power Company of Muskogee, Oklahoma, purchased the Prairie Grove Electric Company and three years later sold it to the Southwestern Gas and Electric Company of Shreveport, Louisiana. The establishment of the Ozark Electric Cooperative as a part of the New Deal's Rural Electrification Program in 1935 made electric power available to rural residents of western Washington County and revolutionized farm life in the area. In the meantime the Arkansas Western Gas Company, incorporated in 1929, provided Fayetteville with natural gas the following year, but the company's gas lines did not reach Prairie Grove until seventeen years later.

Beginning in the opening decade of the twentieth century, civic leaders in Prairie Grove became aware that the much revered

spring and wells would not provide an adequate water supply for their growing town. Finally in 1933 their efforts, assisted by the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA), enabled the town to escape a water shortage of disastrous proportions. The construction of a water tank and later a city lake made available sufficient water to meet the town's needs until late in the twentieth century, when a federally funded project, known as the Two-Ton Project, made available to Prairie Grove and other portions of western Washington County water from Beaver Lake, which had been created by the federal government under the auspices of the Corps of Engineers. The modernized sewer system that accompanied improvements in the town's water works received a significant boost in the 1930s as a result of loans from various New Deal agencies. During the decades that followed its sewer treatment plant has been regularly upgraded to comply with state and federal requirements.

Like other towns in the nation, Prairie Grove has wrestled with a succession of issues relating to adequate law enforcement and the menace of fire. As one writer has noted, when Prairie Grove was incorporated in 1888, "there were few laws to be enforced and constables or marshals kept the peace." For many years the town's merchants contributed to a fund to pay a night watchman, whose primary responsibility was to protect local businesses. The office of town marshal gradually acquired deputies and was ultimately replaced by the present-day police department.

Throughout its early history Prairie Grove suffered repeated losses caused by fires: one such fire in 1906 burned out the entire downtown area; another in 1914 destroyed the First National Bank building. For many years the town depended on a volunteer fire company, which used a pull-type vehicle equipped with ladders and buckets to extinguish fires. The advent of motor vehicles and an ample water system vastly increased the

effectiveness of the volunteer firemen. Beginning in the 1920s the town government assumed responsibility for the fire department, which increased in both size and efficiency as the town grew.

From the late nineteenth century on, Prairie Grove had a relatively large number of physicians and dentists to provide health care for the town's residents as well those living in the surrounding rural areas. Among the best known physicians there were Drs. Samuel E. Rogers, E. G. McCormick, William H. Mock, James Pittman, brothers Frank and Cecil Riggall, and Jefferson Jay Baggett. The practice of early physicians often extended over a wide area. Dr. McCormick's practice, for example, took him more than thirty miles from the town, and he ventured on occasion into the Indian Territory to treat patients. McCormick and other physicians often performed surgery in the homes of patients.

Prairie Grove ultimately had two hospitals. One was the Elizabeth Hospital, a twenty-five bed facility that opened in 1937 and closed in 1965. The Drs. Riggall were the founders of this hospital. Ultimately, Elizabeth Hospital had a staff of six doctors, sixteen nurses, and various other personnel. The second hospital was the Mock Clinic, a thirty- bed facility established in the 1940s and operated by Drs. Mock and Baggett. It closed in the 1970s. Prairie Grove's physicians were conspicuous in the business, educational, and civic life of the Prairie Grove community. Dr. Mock donated a piece of land to the town for a park. Known as Mock Park, it included the famous spring that served as primary source of water for the fledgling settlement that became Prairie Grove. Mock, as well as Drs. McCormick, Baggett, and their medical colleagues, played important roles in various businesses and banks and were strong advocates of better public schools.

Women also figured prominently in the public life of Prairie Grove. They not only served as teachers in the town's private and public schools, but they also owned millinery shops and other small businesses that catered primarily to a female clientele and

worked in certain stores and offices. Women's organizations, even before women could vote, initiated or supported important efforts to promote the town's schools, libraries, and churches. The Prairie Grove Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), organized in 1906, was an exceptionally active women's organization. Two years after it was founded, the UDC purchased nine acres of land located at the approximate geographic center of the site of the Battle of Prairie Grove. This purchase was the beginning of what ultimately became the Prairie Grove Battlefield Park, a major historic site in Northwest Arkansas. The UDC envisioned the park as a memorial to the Confederate soldiers who fought and perished in the battle. They maintained the park for almost a half century. By the mid-1920s the park had undergone substantial improvements, including the construction of a bandstand and a gravel driveway. During the Great Depression and World War II the park fell into a state of disrepair, but in the 1950s the Prairie Grove Lion's Club spearheaded a campaign that brought to fruition the vision of the Daughters. The park came to include a collection of historic structures from the area that were removed from their original sites and rebuilt within the park's boundaries. By 1960 such structures included the chimney of Rhea's Mill, John Latta's pioneer Vineyard Village, John Morrow's house, and the Garrett School House of hand-hewn logs. Five years later, the Hindman Hall Museum, named in honor of Confederate General Thomas C. Hindman and located in the park, completed the "historic aspect" of the park's development. In 1971 the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism assumed control and management of the Prairie Grove Battlefield Park, which ultimately included a much larger area than the nine acres purchased by the UDC in 1908. Located on Highway 62 and easily accessible, the park today is a popular tourist attraction and the site of battle reenactments, an annual Clothes Line Fair, and

various entertainment events. It is eloquent testimony to the role of women in preserving the heritage of Northwest Arkansas.

Another tangible monument to the leadership role played by Prairie Grove women is the town's public library. Like women elsewhere in the nation, those in Prairie Grove had long manifested interest in educational institutions and libraries. In 1935 an opportunity to realize their goal of establishing a public library arose when a New Deal agency designed to assist in lifting the nation out of the Great Depression agreed to pay the salary of a librarian if the town assumed the responsibility for providing a building and its maintenance. Under the leadership of Mrs. J. C. Parks and other women, the community enthusiastically responded with donations of money and books. Prairie Grove's public library opened in the American Legion Hut in 1935. A lack of funds forced its temporary closing two years later, but the fund-raising activities of women allowed it to resume operation shortly afterward. Throughout its existence the library has been a source of community pride, and the town's residents have been consistent in their support. The one-mill library tax levied by Washington County in 1948 greatly benefited such local libraries. Prairie Grove's library was housed in a succession of buildings until the its board secured federal grants that made possible the construction of an up-to-date structure in 1967.

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The coming of a railroad that stretched across western Washington County not only benefited Prairie Grove but also smaller communities along its route, notably Farmington, Summers, and Lincoln. Farmington, an old but very small community with an impressive grain mill and a scattering of other structures, was located a few miles east of Fayetteville. The settlement acquired a post office in 1868 and "was laid out" two

years later. The arrival of the Ozark and Cherokee Central Railroad signaled the beginning of a period of growth and prosperity for the town, and its depot was soon shipping thousands of pounds of strawberries to distant markets. To the west of Prairie Grove along the railroad were Lincoln and Summers. In a sense both owed their existence to the railroad. Lincoln, in particular, emerged as a town of considerable prominence in western Washington County. It quickly eclipsed Summers and rivaled Prairie Grove as a trade center. The area around what became Lincoln was settled in the late 1820s, grew slowly, and underwent several name changes. In 1884 Lincoln became the name of the post office there. Within a little more than a decade after the arrival of the railroad in 1902, Lincoln had a substantial business district with stores, blacksmith shops, doctors' offices, and a hotel. It also possessed a bank, the Bank of Lincoln, organized in 1903, that remained locally owned for almost a century. Incorporated as a town in 1907, Lincoln became the commercial center of a prosperous agricultural area devoted in large part to the production of apples and grain. While Prairie Grove and Lincoln prospered during the decades after the arrival of the railroad, Boonsboro/Cane Hill, Cincinnati, and other communities bypassed by the railroad steadily declined. Some virtually disappeared in a manner reminiscent of the "lost" towns and cities that Donald Harington has written about.

By the 1940s, when the east-west railroad had ceased operation and the fruit and grain production in the Prairie Grove Valley had declined for a variety of reasons, transportation in the region, as elsewhere in America, had already shifted away from horse-drawn wagons and buggies to motor vehicles, whose increasing use, in turn, prompted a dramatic decline of rail service and traffic. Slowly even agriculture embraced the automobile age by using tractors. The rapid increase in the use of automobiles and trucks pointed up the need for more adequate roads, whose

construction and maintenance would be extraordinarily expensive. As early as 1915 the Arkansas legislature enacted the Alexander Road Law to address the issue of highway construction. Subsequent legislation not only produced new highways but also led to greater state control over roads, more and different taxes to fund road construction and maintenance, and a heavy burden of bonded indebtedness. "Until the 1950s," Ben Johnson observed in *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930–1999*, "paved highways [in Arkansas] were an uncommon luxury." The principal modern highway into Northwest Arkansas from the Arkansas River valley was Highway 71. Originally it was an old wagon road, which was periodically improved by county governments. In time the old road was re-routed in places, covered with gravel on a base of clay, and finally paved. The paved Highway 71 that opened in August 1930 wound northward from the Arkansas River over the Boston Mountains to Fayetteville and finally to the Missouri state line. As treacherous for motorists as it was scenic, Highway 71 was nonetheless the heavily traveled "main street" into Northwest Arkansas. It essentially remains so in the twenty-first century but under a new name (Interstate 540) and along a different route. Completed in the 1990s, I-540 possesses dual lanes, a tunnel, and great stretches of towering bridge-like structures that span deep ravines. As a result, on sections of the highway the motorist feels as if he or she is traveling suspended in mid-air. In a vein similar to the north-south Frisco Railroad in the 1880s, Highway 71 and its successor, I- 540, bypassed the Prairie Grove Valley. If the configuration of the present-day north-south highway through Washington County was influenced by the rapid commercial and industrial development in the so-called Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers-Bentonville corridor, it has also accelerated the growth and prosperity of that corridor, as indeed has the building of the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport, which has direct, non-stop flights to Little Rock, Atlanta, St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago,

Dallas, Memphis, and New York. While the hustle and bustle of Northwest Arkansas gives the impression of restlessness, no one is likely to think in terms of its remoteness in the opening of the twenty-first century.

Certainly Prairie Grove, Farmington, Lincoln and other western Washington County communities cannot be considered remote and isolated. Highway 62, an east-west road, links some of these communities to Fayetteville and I-540. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Highway 62 more or less parallels the route of the Ozark and Cherokee Central Road from Fayetteville to the Oklahoma border. The highway also intersects with north-south roads both in Arkansas and across the state line in Oklahoma that are located in the general vicinity of the Line Road of the pre-Civil War era. The decline of certain western Washington County communities, begun when they were bypassed by the railroad at the turn of the century, has accelerated in the age of the automobile when they were bypassed by the principal highways in the region.. This is not to imply that such settlements were without paved roads that linked them to the outside world; in fact, a network of county and state roads, some paved and many unpaved, exists in western Washington County. The historical experience of the once thriving village of Cincinnati is instructive about what happened to some communities in the western portion of the county. In an interview in 1974 George W. Bond, an elderly resident of Cincinnati, related the reasons for the "death" of his village. He cited several reasons for its demise: (1) the reluctance of the community to unite behind efforts to participate in the building of a highway from Missouri to Fort Smith that would pass through Cincinnati, (2) the bypassing of the village by the railroad, which resulted in trade shifts to towns along the rail line, and (3) the arrival of the automobile, which allowed its younger people to escape a community that offered them far fewer

employment opportunities than those available in towns such as Prairie Grove and especially Fayetteville.

Both Prairie Grove and Lincoln, however, continued to thrive, not only because they were located on a main east-west highway, but also because each contained leaders who adapted to the changed conditions that confronted them. Without abandoning their individual identities and holding fast to their community pride, these leaders were quick to to tap into the regional focus on poultry—poultry agriculture, poultry processing, and auxiliary enterprises associated with companies headquartered in Springdale, especially those founded by John Tyson and the George family. While fruit played a diminishing role in the economies of Prairie Grove and Lincoln, both towns remained tied to local agriculture. Grain remained important, but increasing numbers of farmers were turning to raising cattle and especially chickens. By 1950 poultry was second only to cotton as the source of Arkansas's agricultural production.

Among the farmers in the Prairie Grove Valley who went into the chicken business was Caswell Wilson, the grandson of William Wilson, the owner of Excelsior plantation near Viney Grove and Prairie Grove. The plantation had first focused on grain and livestock. Then it added apple orchards and cattle. In the late 1950s and 1960s Caswell Wilson entered the broiler business, which provided Wilson with a degree of prosperity that his family had not experienced for many years. He was not only able to buy back portions of Excelsior that the family had been forced to sell to stay financially afloat but also to expand his herd of cattle. The experience of the Wilson family in shifting their farming operations to poultry and cattle represented a trend among farmers in the Prairie Grove Valley.

The economies of both Prairie Grove and Lincoln in the last quarter of the twentieth century still depended on the agricultural areas that surrounded them, but the agriculture practiced there

was undergoing significant changes. While a few orchards still existed and Lincoln still has its Appletown and an annual Apple Festival, the apple empire had long passed its heyday. The same was true of grain and hardwood products, even though a lumber mill was established in Prairie Grove in 1953 that initially turned out four thousand to six thousand board feet of lumber per day. In recent years its production has been substantially less. Both Prairie Grove and Lincoln contained vibrant business/downtown districts well into the post-World War II era. Such districts included an assortment of stores—hardware, furniture, and grocery—and even small department stores, as well as cafes, barber shops, and garages. Each town had chain grocery stores. Each attracted branches of outside financial institutions: First Federal Savings and Loan of Fayetteville established a branch in Prairie Grove in 1974, and First Federal Savings and Loan of Arkansas (Little Rock) purchased a local savings and loan in Lincoln in 1983. But by the close of the twentieth century the business and shopping districts of both Prairie Grove and Lincoln exhibited signs of deterioration. For example, one of the most historic businesses in downtown Prairie Grove, the Southern Mercantile Company, which began operation in the age of the horse and buggy and survived well into age of the automobile and airplane, closed the last of its multiple departments in 1987. Its departments once included dry goods, hardware, furniture, groceries, a funeral home, and an ambulance service. For many years Southern Mercantile's hardware department was the principal supplier of buggies to area residents. The deterioration of the downtown districts of both Prairie Grove and Lincoln owed much no doubt to easy access to nearby cities and especially the Northwest Arkansas Mall located between Fayettville and Springdale.

Despite visible evidence of decline in the appearance of their downtown districts, both Prairie Grove and Lincoln pursued

strategies to attract new industries and to adjust to changes taking place on surrounding farms. Even though Prairie Grove made efforts to capitalize on the new poultry agriculture by attracting a hatchery as early as 1938, poultry-related plants do not appear to have dramatically multiplied in the town. Probably the most notable example of its new industry is the plant opened there by Magnetek Universal Electric Company in 1981. By the end of the decade the plant, devoted to the production of fractional horsepower electric motors, was turning out thirty-five hundred motors per day and providing employment for three hundred people. More recently the establishment of the Speciality Fastening System , a privately owned company for manufacturing and collating high quality steel nails for the construction industry, promises to offer additionl jobs for area residents.

Lincoln appears to have been more successful in attracting enterprises related to poultry. It possesses a Tyson Hatchery, opened in 1974, which has the capacity to hatch more than 700,000 chicks per week, and a branch of Latco, Inc., a diversified corporation, whose Lincoln plant focuses on the manufacture of steel trusses for chicken houses. The town also has a plant of Talbot General Wire Products, a company devoted to the manufacture of grills for fans, air-conditioners, heating units, and barbeques. Located in close proximity to the town are several large egg production operations under contract to Cargill, a giant poultry firm. By the late 1980s among the most significant table-egg producers in the vicinity of Lincoln were the George Briggs Egg Farms, Appletown Hen Complex, and Latta Farms, all of which are fully automated. The owner of Latta Farms described his hens in the late 1980s as "lean, mean laying machines."

Lincoln, Prairie Grove, and other towns and villages in western Washington County recognize that their welfare is closely linked to industries and enterprises that dominate the corridor extending from Fayetteville through Bentonville. In this corridor

are located the national and international headquarters of major poultry, merchandising, and trucking companies, as well as regional branches of major national corporations, various financial institutions, and the University of Arkansas and Northwest Arkansas Community College. In describing Prairie Grove in the year 2000, Mayor Andrew Bain spoke directly to the relationship between his town and the booming economy along the I-540 corridor a few miles away. Prairie Grove's economy, he explained, was widely diversified. Lincoln, Prairie Grove, and other towns and villages in western Washington County recognize that their welfare is closely linked to industries and enterprises that dominate the corridor extending from Fayetteville through Bentonville and "was based on local manufacturing as well as retailing, food production, trucking, and manufacturing concerns of Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers, and Bentonville." He insisted that Prairie Grove residents had "the combined advantage of living near a metroplitan area with its shopping, dining, cultural, and recreational activities, while enjoying a sense of community in a small town atmosphere."

The census of 2000 indicates that those towns and villages nearest the I-540 corridor experienced significant and sometimes startling population growth in the decade of the 1990s: Prairie Grove's population increased from 1,761 to 2,540, a 44% increase; Farmington's increased from 1,322 to 3,605, an increase of 173%. The population of the more distant Lincoln increased by only 20%, from 1,460 to 1,752.

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In the decades following the Civil War, the Prairie Grove Valley and its communities experienced a series of other crises. Throughout the late nineteenth century, Valley farmers, like those elsewhere, suffered a steady decline in the prices they received for

their crops. Convinced that they were victims of "capitalistic economic exploitation" by the giant corporations emerging in the country, they protested loudly and sought to arrest the deterioration of their status by forming a succession of organizations. The first of these to appear in the Valley was the Grange (Patrons of Husbandry), which was active until the mid-1870s. With the decline of the Grange, the Brothers of Freedom took up the cause of farmers in western Washington County. In 1885 this organization merged with another farm protest movement that evolved into the Farmers Alliance, whose offspring was a farmer-based political party, the Populist Party, which figured significantly in state and national politics through the mid-1890s. The mouthpiece of the Farmers Alliance in the Valley, and indeed in Washington County, was *The Alliance Advocate*, first published in Evansville in 1891. The Alliance's lecturer was J. P. Carnahan of Cane Hill/Boonsboro, who insisted that trusts and monopolies were responsible for a system of vicious class legislation and currency contraction that had reduced America's farmers to the status of debtors at the mercy of corporate giants. For him and for the Alliance, the nation was in the midst of a "conflict between the people and corporate power" —a conflict exacerbated by the intense depression of the 1890s. Carnahan waged a vigorous but futile campaign as the Alliance candidate for governor of Arkansas in 1892. The disintegration of the Alliance-backed Populist Party in the presidential campaign of 1896 and the return of relative prosperity, especially in agricultural areas, essentially ended farm protests—at least for a time.

Thirty years later the Prairie Grove Valley, along with the rest of the nation, was mired in another depression called the Great Depression because it was the most severe such crisis that the nation had ever experienced. For Arkansas, Washington County, and the Valley it was a time of the twin plagues of

depression and drought. Given its location, the Valley was acutely aware of the so-called dust storms that swept across the Great Plains depositing layers of dust as far away as Memphis, Tennessee. Upon his inauguration in 1933, Democratic president Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal set about immediately to address the economic and environmental problems facing the American people, including those living in the Valley. The relief and recovery programs launched by New Deal Agencies such as the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Works Progress Administration, Rural Electrification Administration, and others, as well as various credit, mortgage, and loan legislation, had a profound and visible impact on Valley farms and towns. Few Valley residents failed to reap the benefits of New Deal projects related to road and school construction and repair, water supply and sewer systems, and rural electrification, as well as the direct relief, employment, loans, and other assistance offered by the federal government.

The historical literature on the Depression's impact on Arkansas devotes relatively little attention to the state's northwestern counties. It focuses instead on the delta counties, where large plantations with a labor system based on sharecropping prevailed and where the biracial Southern Tenant Farmers Union flourished for a time and attracted much attention. However, the people of western Washington County by no means escaped the devastating impact of the Great Depression and in many cases no doubt had to revert to the self-sufficient, subsistence existence and barter economy that their forebears had practiced. But neither in the Valley nor in Arkansas did the Depression drive hordes of people off the land. Notwithstanding the attention devoted to the Arkies and their neighbors the Okies who fled to California during the 1930s, the rural population of Arkansas declined during the decade by only two percentage

points, and tenant farmers from the delta accounted for much, perhaps most, of the out-migration. As Ben Johnson noted in *Arkansas in Modern America*, "The Depression did not launch a grand exodus of Arkansas travelers to the golden West." In fact, western Washington County attracted some of those who joined the back-to-the-land movement in the 1930s.

Even though the Prairie Grove Valley has undergone dramatic changes during the last 170 years, it remains in some respects similar in appearance to what the Reverend Mr. Buchanan saw when he explored it about 1830. It, of course, is no longer a frontier wilderness as it was when Buchanan entered it, but the landscape, notwithstanding large chicken houses and enclaves despoiled by human habitation, remains beautiful with clear streams and fertile valleys and prairies surrounded by mountains in the distance. Touring the area in the opening of the twenty-first century, travelers can still glimpse features of the country that so impressed the early families who settled it and built substantial communities—some of which have survived and thrived, while others have withered away leaving little visible evidence of the status they once enjoyed. Cane Hill, for example, still exists but bears little resemblance to the bustling village that early in the nineteenth century exerted such profound influence. Throughout its history western Washington County has been and remains essentially rural. Its economy has been dependent on agriculture and agriculture-related industries. Even today the economic base of Prairie Grove and the section of the county to its west is based largely on agriculture, although the emphasis of that agriculture has changed over time. Today industries in the area are often linked to the "new agriculture" of poultry and cattle.

Beginning with the earliest settlers in the Prairie Grove Valley, kinship networks figured significantly in the establishment of communities. Original settlers and their

descendants were typically American in that they were a restless people, a people on the move, who fanned out in western Washington County to establish new communities that often bore a striking resemblance to those from which they had migrated. Therefore, there was a connectedness among and between many such communities. Theirs was a close-knit, family-oriented society whose communal ethos found expression in churches, schools, and a wide variety of organizations ranging from Masonic Orders to societies dedicated to the prohibition of alcoholic beverages. Writing about small towns in 1957, Max Lerner, a shrewd commentator on America and its past, observed: "History, geography and economics gave each American town some distinctive traits of style that are imbedded in the mind, and the memory of this style is all the more marked because of the nostalgia felt, in a largely urban America, for what seems the lost serenity of small-town childhood." That such memory and nostalgia are important ingredients in one's sense of identity and sense of community is abundantly evident in the histories of Prairie Grove, Lincoln, Cincinnati, Rhea's Mill, and Cane Hill compiled by local historians. Officials in Prairie Grove and elsewhere capitalize on this nostalgia and sense of community in promoting their towns, claiming that they offer a "small town atmosphere" with easy access to the amenities of a large metropolitan area.

Correction: Two alert readers informed us that Sarah Ann Rhea McIlroy was the daughter of William H. and Elizabeth C. Powell Rhea. Sarah married James Hayden McIlroy on June 5, 1889. Part One of this essay erroneously cited her as a daughter of McIlroy who married a Rhea.

Bibliographical Note: This essay is based primarily upon research in Washington County newspapers, various manuscript

collections and pamphlets in the Special Collections Division of Mullins Library, University of Arkansas, materials in Shiloh Museum and Fayetteville Public Library, numerous articles in *Flashback* and various other publications of the Washington County Historical Society, as well as the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* and the *Ozark Historical Review*, and book-length studies/compilations devoted to the history of Prairie Grove, Cincinnati, Lincoln, Rhea's Mill, Summers, and other communities. Much valuable information was also provided by the *History of Washington County, Arkansas* (Springdale: Shiloh Museum, 1989); *History of Benton, Washington. Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889); Gary Batershell, *The Wilsons of Excelsior: The Family, the Land, and the House* (Fayetteville: Phoenix International, 2000); Ben F. Johnson, III, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930–1999* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), Mark R. Hackbarth, "The Effect of Kinship on Land Choice in Washington County, Arkansas, 1830–1850," (M. A. Thesis, University of Arkansas, 1980), and the "Autobiography of J. J. Baggett," typescript, copy in possession of the author.

THE ELIZABETH HOSPITAL

R. D. MANNING, M.D.

The Elizabeth Hospital, located on the eastern approach of Highway 62 in Prairie Grove, was built in 1938–1939. It was erected as a result of Doctors Cecil and Frank Riggall having lost their privileges at the City Hospital in Fayetteville. The structure was named after the Riggalls' mother, who lived in Rochdale England, the Riggall brothers' original home.

The hospital consisted of a single-story, red-brick building containing twenty-six hospital beds, an operating room, nursery, waiting room, X-ray room, laboratory, secretary's office, kitchen, dining room, an in-house drugstore, three doctor's offices, and examining rooms. All facilities were used for in-patient needs as well as the out-patients, who were seen in the doctors' offices.

Dr. Cecil Riggall and Dr. Ronald Riggall, who was Dr. Frank Riggall's son, left the hospital and Prairie Grove in 1952. Dr. Frank Riggall continued to use the hospital until his untimely death in 1964.

The hospital was recognized under the Fulbright Foreign Student Exchange program and accepted many young Canadian doctors from the University of Western Ontario, located in London, Ontario, the school from Dr. Frank Riggall had graduated. This recognition and exchange program resulted from Dr. Frank Riggall's credentials—postgraduate fellowships in both medicine and surgery from London, England, and Edinburgh, Scotland. In addition, at the age of sixty, and while actively

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R. D. Manning, M.D., of Prairie Grove, kindly wrote this article to satisfy the curiosity of the editor, whose younger brother was born in the Elizabeth Hospital. That and other memories of the Riggalls and the facility led to puzzlement over its disappearance.

practicing and teaching, he received his law degree from the University of Arkansas. Many of these Canadian doctors who came for additional internship during the twenty-six years of the hospital's existence returned to Canada to practice, though a considerable number located in various states in the U.S.

In early 1965 the hospital was inspected for inclusion in the Medicare program, which was initiated on July 1 of that year. The inspection revealed that the hospital did not qualify for Medicare patients. An example of the deficiency was that Medicare required halls be eight feet wide, while the corridors of the Elizabeth Hospital were only seven feet wide. It was with extreme reluctance that Dr. R. D. Manning, now the sole owner and operator of the facility, was forced to close the doors to in-patients on June 30, 1965.The only good thing about Dr. Frank Riggall's death the year before was that he did not have to witness this closure.

Dr. Manning continued to hold his out-patient offices in the hospital for several years, but living quarters and offices were also made and rented out. About eight years after its closure, Dr. Manning sold the property to GMS of Fayetteville, an electronics firm. This company did research and development as well as subcontracting for making electronic components for Baldwin Piano Company of Fayetteville.

After a few years GMS discontinued operations, and the building and property were sold to a Fayetteville attorney, who leased it to several different businesses, including a bowling alley and feed store over the next few years. Apparently none of these was successful and the building fell into a serious state of disrepair. After several years of standing empty, the structure was razed.

THE ARKANSAS OZARKS: A 50'S TOUR

The Washington County Historical Society has received from the former Mary Frances Follett a booklet entitled, " A Guide to God's Country: The Arkansas Ozarks," of which only one hundred copies were printed. The booklet was a class project in 1957 by Walter Lemke's journalism class 413b, and from it we have excerpted a few articles which may bring back memories of Washington County and perceptions of the students forty-six years ago.

The project began with discussions of the attractions that Northwest Arkansas had to offer visitors. Correspondence was initiated with chambers of commerce and other local promotion agencies. The class made several field trips in order to familiarize the class members with the scenic spots, historic battlefields, highways, and tourist accommodations.

Each student then wrote his own article, designed his own pages, edited the copy, cut the stencils, ran off copies on the duplicating machine, assembled and bound the booklets. The booklet looks very much like the first publications of *Flashback*. Each page bears the student's byline, which means the student not only wrote the article but did all the mechanical work on his page.

Class members working on the project were: William Downs, Little Rock; John C. DuVal, Fort Smith; Larry Gill, Fayetteville; Robert Lee Harris, Fayetteville; Tom Johnson, Fayetteville; Jerry R. Kendall, Magnolia; Andrew J. Lucas, Jr, North Little Rock; Donald W. Millsap, Fort Smith; James L. Morriss, Springdale; Ronald J. Phillips, Blytheville; Jerry L. Russell, Little Rock; Dave

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Charles W. Stewart III, former president of the Washington County Historical Society, selected the excerpts from the booklet for publication in *Flashback*.

Shaw, North Little Rock; Sammy Smith, Camden; and Kay Terry, St. Charles.

ARTS, CRAFTS, AND ANTIQUES IN THE OZARKS
by Kay Terry

Within the confines of the Arkansas Ozarks many interesting arts and crafts are practiced. Since Arkansas is only a few generations removed from pioneer days, this craft-work is the outgrowth of home production of necessities.

Today's arts and crafts are carried on by the descendants of the pioneers of this area. Although their work is for the commercial market, the original authenticity of the handicraft is maintained.

The making of Ozark Hillbilly dolls in the Boston Mountains is fascinating. These dolls, the specialty of Mrs. Naomi Clarke, are made of corncobs, hickory nuts, dried apples, buckeyes, wood, cornshucks, and other materials. Mrs. Clarke's shop in Winslow adds a bit of color to a drive through the Boston Mountain range.

Another craft prevalent in the Ozarks is woodworking. Ruth Pember, Farmington, makes unusual picture frames from walnut and hickory. Ivan Denton in the Shop of the Ozarks, Winslow, displays his wood carvings of animals. This craft is further made practical by the production of wooden salad bowls in a shop near Eureka Springs. These bowls, carved from cherry and walnut, are a product of exquisite workmanship as well as a memento of Ozarks culture.

Handweaving is also an art in the Ozarks, noted for baskets which may seen at may of the roadside shops and stands. These baskets are all made by Ozark craftsmen. The Northwest Arkansas Handweavers Guild fosters the production of many pieces of quality cloth. Robert Barnes is a noted hand-weaver and his work

with that of other Ozark artisans is displayed at the Guild's annual exhibit at War Eagle.

The paintings of Louis Freund, a renowned artist of the Ozarks, may be seen at the Flea Market in Fayetteville. Some of Mr. Freund's works depict the culture and past of the Ozarks. Robert Barnes, in his studio in Greenland, has a collection of his watercolors typifying life in the Ozarks.

Leatherwork, a holdover from the days when saddles, shoes, and other leather goods had to be made at local shops, is found at Smith Crafts, 108 N. St., Fayetteville. A variety of belts, billfolds, and custom-made leather goods invites your attention in their shop.

Mrs. Ruth Bunker, in her shop at Fayetteville, works with semi-precious stones in her handmade silver jewelry. The touch of the artisan is evident in her handsome costume pieces.

Realistic orchids made from wood pulp are the specialties of Ruth Gilbert. She has her shop on Highway 71 north of Fayetteville.

Many of the hillside cabins of the Ozarks contain items which are interesting as antiques. This "antique hunting" is good sport and it's open season on them year round.

Barrack's in Springdale and Monte Ne have unusual displays of antiques. Other shops in this area are: Olive Ellis's collection in Eureka Springs; Mrs. Homer Davis's shop on Highway 45 East; Mrs. Alma Moke's shop, Fayetteville; Western Trading Post, owned by Jack Holt, on Highway 71 North. All of these collections of antiques are worth looking into if your interest tends toward antiques.

The Ozarks Council of Arts and Crafts has its headquarters at the Flea Market. Many of the crafts mentioned may be seen there. Blair's Gift Shop, the Pioneer Shop, and Moore's Gift Shop—all in Fayetteville—also display and sell products of the Ozarks.

FLASHBACK

The Ozarks are full of arts, handicrafts, antiques. For the investment of a little time you will receive dividends in gift and souvenir ideas as well as appreciation of Ozark life of yesteryear and today.

GOOD FOOD
And Where To Find It!
by Andrew Lucas

Annually thousands of people pass through the Ozarks and many of them make these rolling hills their vacation spot. Amid the memories of warm moonlight nights, cool lakes, and cascading streams, nothing remains more vivid than thoughts of leisure moments spent with meals prepared in a true southern style.

Your first bite will be the start of a lifelong romance. The foods you find in the Ozarks of Arkansas have won for themselves a reputation surpassed by no other.

And this was not luck. For many years old family recipes, native to this area, have been handed down. Mixed with the warm personality and easy going nature of hill folks, there has evolved an art of cooking that is second to none.

Also foods with a nationalistic flavor are here, and when combined with the cool, clear Ozarks air the taste becomes doubly enriched, so much so that their own homeland could not equal its quality.

From Clarksville, going east, toward Fort Smith and Van Buren, the many restaurants and cafes offer to the hungry traveler the best meals possible, and at a very economical cost.

Traveling north one again finds equal establishments. At the highest peak reached on U.S. Highway 71, Mount Gaylor, is located Burns Gables. From their dining room you can look out over the east ranges of the Boston Mountains and enjoy southern-fried chicken, steaks, or fish.

In Fayetteville, north of Mount Gaylor, there can be found a variety of restaurants and cafes pleasing to the traveler: Ferguson's cafeteria in the Mountain Inn hotel, Mexican Original restaurant, and Castle Courts cafe with an appetizing emphasis on south of the border foods. Blue Mill café, and McKenna's Steak House are but a few of the many places available.

Further along Highway 71 is Schmidt's King Chicken between Fayetteville and Springdale. In Springdale is Brogdon's Chickenlittle and the A.Q. Chicken House.

West of Springdale is the Italian settlement of Tontitown. Here one discovers what many before them has discovered, Italian foods comparable with none, even in the sunny hills of Italy. Mary Maestri's is famous throughout the Southwest for her spaghetti and fried chicken that's out of this world, with Jake's Coffee Shop offering pizza pie, Italian spaghetti, ravioli, steaks, and fried chicken, and the Venetian Inn also presenting the best in Italian foods.

Regardless of your destination a meal in any of Northwest Arkansas restaurants or cafes will prove just what we mean. Bentonville is northwest of Springdale and offers, among the many excellent eating places, The Plantation, specializing in fried chicken and the Massey Hotel dining room. In Rogers the hungry traveler will be pleased to find the Orchard Room in the Arkansas Hotel. "Little Switzerland," or Eureka Springs, among the many sights and oddities, presents the Basin Park Hotel with its excellent dining room.

The traveler will, however, have to search out among the descendants of the early settlers to find recipes known only to these natives. Little known to many, these mountain folks keep quietly to themselves along with their recipes of, as examples, Razorback Nut Bread, Red Flannel Hash, Bow and Arrow Potted Fish, Ambushed Asparagus, or Covered-Wagon Pumpkin Pie.

FLASHBACK

Here's the Red Flannel Hash recipe to try at home:

Ingredients

3 boiled potatoes, chopped
1 cup cooked corn beef chopped
1 cup cooked beets, chopped
1 tablespoon chopped onions
Salt, pepper, milk, butter, or margarine

Directions

Place potatoes, meat, beets, and onions together. Add seasoning and milk to moisten. Put into a hot skillet in which 3 tablespoons of butter has been melted (or margarine) and cook over moderate heat until brown and crusty on the bottom. Fold like an omelet and put on a hot platter. It makes four (4) servings.

Sound good? Well friend, you can bet when you leave this vacation paradise praising Arkansas cooking, you'll promise yourself that you will be back for more.

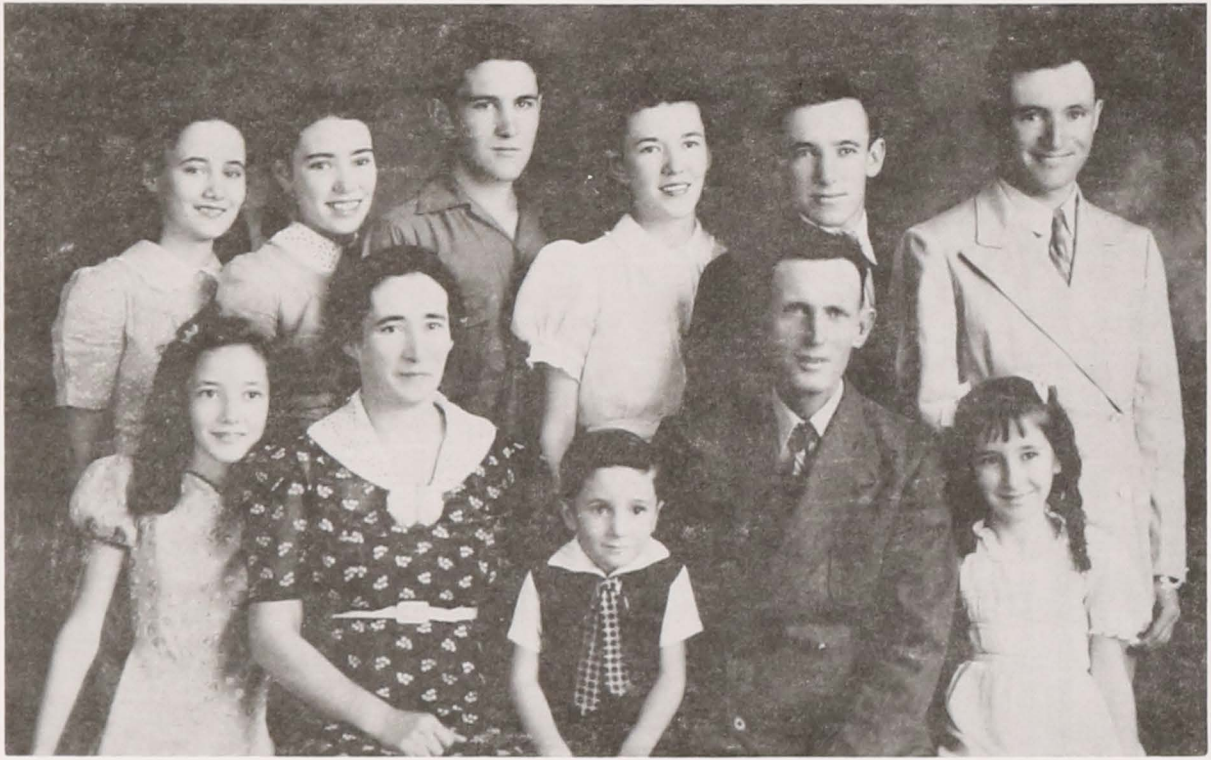
SPRINGDALE
by Bill Downs

Nobody in this deceptively small Ozark community batted an eye recently when *LOOK* magazine announced that Springdale was the wealthiest city, per capita, in the United States. Peep into almost any broiler house in this center of one of the largest poultry-raising areas in the world, and you're likely to find a millionaire. Not the Fifth Avenue kind, but easy-going Arkansans who are always happy to welcome you to their homes. Driving down the "Longest Main Street In Northwest Arkansas," you'll

see the old and new side by side living in happy coexistence. Big factories in the background in operation from sunup till sundown, original homes of southern fried chicken sending delicious, mouth-watering fragrance through your open window, and if you arrive in the first part of July, you'll see one of the rip-roarin'est rodeos in the country.

And for the fancier of antiques, Barracks is internationally famous. Priceless treasures of the French Provincial and Colonial periods, exquisite originals, oriental rugs, countless other items we guarantee will give you many hours of browsing and buying pleasure!

MAKE SPRINGDALE A MUST ON YOUR ROUTE
THROUGH THE OZARKS!



The Morrow family in 1940 while living at the Gregory place, east of Rogers, Arkansas. Front row: Una May, Sylvia, Thurston, Tom, Sula Jo; back row: Joy, Carmyn, Graydon, Thomazine, Douglas, Durward (Courtesy Carmyn Pitts).

A NOMADIC LIFE: THE MANY MOVES OF CARMYN MORROW PITTS

CARMYN MORROW PITTS
and
DENELE PITTS CAMPBELL

Carmyn Morrow Pitts was born in August 1923 at Ralls, Texas, thirty miles east of Lubbock, the fifth of nine children born to Sylvia Exer Clark and Thomas Elihue Morrow, both of whom came from families in Greene County, Arkansas. Tom Morrow raised a few head of cattle and hogs and worked a team of mules to grow cotton and corn and a vegetable garden.

Five moves later Tom complained about the humid climate at Mena, Arkansas, and went to look for a place higher up in the state, where he found the name Morrow on a map of Washington County. But when he arrived at Morrow, he decided the "too little" town did not have much to offer, and he ended up at St. Paul, where the logging boom was in full steam. He brought his family to live first in a small house northwest of St. Paul before settling into the Casteel place, a two-story house with a bay window and porches upstairs and down, high upon a mountainside overlooking the White River Valley. They enjoyed a glorious summer before cotton-picking time called them to Texas.

Carmyn Morrow Pitts, a thirty-six year resident of Fayetteville, related this account of her early life and many moves to her daughter Denele Pitts Campbell in January 2002.

The Casteel Place, St. Paul, Arkansas. Left to right are Joy, Tomazine, Carmyn, Douglas, Graydon, and Durward, and standing right, Tom (Courtesy Carmyn Pitts).

Tom gathered his St. Paul crops and left Grandpa Clark in charge of the house and getting the sorghum cane to the mill. Left behind was the furniture—a wood-burning cookstove, iron bedsteads and bedding, a rocking chair, table and benches, a marble-top round table, Sylvia's "Princess" dresser with oval mirror, a small drop-leaf desk, and a "matting" box with hinged lid Tom had built out of lath for Sylvia's quilts. The family packed their "batchin'" equipment—a campstove, a few quilts, featherbed, and feather bolsters, a white enamel bucket with plates, cups, and two serving bowls, the iron skillet, and a deep aluminum stewer Sylvia used to soak whole grain wheat

overnight—into the beloved Baby Overland and headed south. On the journey they stopped along the road each night and made campfires to cook supper. Once when they stopped at a house and asked to use the spring, the lady of house brought them fresh buttermilk.

In Gunter, Texas, they stayed at Sylvia's sister's house to pick cotton for two weeks before moving to a cotton-picking shack near Vera, Texas, where they worked for four weeks. Cotton-picking shacks were crudely built one-room structures about twelve feet by fourteen feet, with two windows and a door. Another of Sylvia's sisters, who also had a cotton crop, fixed up their shack with curtains and supplied a coal-oil stove with oven, where the family lived to pick cotton for another three weeks, before finishing the season at yet another shack near Morrison.

In the winter of 1928 they moved back to the Casteel place in St. Paul, Arkansas, but Grandpa Clark convinced Tom that the ground was too rocky for farming, so they rented a house together—the Greenway place—about 1.5 miles southwest of Springdale (near the current Wal-Mart). It was a temporary home for the two weeks it took Tom to find "Trouble's End," also in Springdale, which was their first home with a bathroom and running water. They had apples and strawberries and were joined again by the grandparents, who again kept the house when Tom began preparing his family for another run back to Texas to pick cotton.

The Crane place, Springdale. Graydon on the fence, Tomazine, Carmyn, Joy, Durward, Una May, and Douglas (Courtesy Carmyn Pitts).

Back in Springdale they discovered that Grandpa Clark had failed to pay rent at "Trouble's End" and had moved three miles east of Springdale to the Crane place. He had rented a nearby house, the Austin place, for Tom's family, but it was only one bedroom. Tom closed in the breezeway to the smokehouse to provide more room, but that fall he found the Nix place with three bedrooms and a big corner porch. He moved his family there and went to Texas to haul grain from November until February 1930.

The Clark grandparents moved to Missouri in 1931, and Tom moved his family into their house, the Crane place. The rent was to be $75 per year, but ultimately Tom could not pay that amount. The owner lowered it to $50, but Tom still had a hard time paying that.

The house was wood-frame, with a porch across the front. At the end of the porch was the well. A long hall ran through the middle of house, separating the living room with fireplace on the

left from the kitchen with the wood-burning cookstove and the table on the right. At the end of the hall was one big bedroom with three double beds where all the kids slept—by now up to seven. The parents and newest baby, Sula Jo, had a bed in the living room, near the rocking chair and fireplace.

The place sat on the side of Fitzgerald Mountain facing east. It had an apple orchard and a vineyard, and Tom set out a strawberry patch. A creek ran along the south property line. Carmyn and her younger sister Joy built playhouses at the base of large chinquapin, hickory, and walnut trees, creating hidden cupboards where they stored favorite trinkets. The oldest brother, Durward, had a secret grove and wild grapevines for playing Tarzan. Together they tended the livestock that they took each time they moved—horses, cows, and chickens, plus a few hogs, turkeys, geese, ducks, dogs, and cats.

They lived at the Crane place almost four years, the longest time Carmyn had ever lived in one place. She cried when they moved; it had become her dearest home. But the two oldest boys had finished eighth grade and the family didn't have money to send them to high school in Springdale. Sylvia had heard of a free vocational school in Huntsville, so they moved to the Dotson place there. It had a parlor just inside the front door, a place for receiving guests. Then came the living room with fireplace, three bedrooms, a kitchen, a closed-in back porch, and an outhouse in the back. They carried drinking water from a spring across the road. The barn was also across the road, and farther down, big junk piles.

In 1937, four moves and another baby, Thurston, later, they moved to the Gregory place east of Rogers on Prairie Creek. It was a big two-story house with four bedrooms upstairs and one down, living and dining rooms, a big kitchen, and a bathroom with a tub but no running water. The water pump was on the back

porch. They worked and saved money from selling bottled milk.

Then in January 1942 they had saved enough money to buy eighty acres with a small two-bedroom house near Lowell. Sylvia planned to build her twenty-room dream home for which she had so long pined, so her sister Tomazine named the place Quit Pinin'. They closed in the porch to make more room and used the entry hall for an extra bedroom. Tom slept there when he was home from his job in Rogers, where he worked at a chicken-dressing plant.

That May Carmyn graduated from Rogers High School, and in the fall she started college at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, riding with classmates from Rogers until the war called them into service. Then she moved into Davis Hall dormitory at 1030 West Maple. But soon the Junior Birdmen (seventeen-year-old Army Air Corps recruits) needed to stay there while in training, so she moved back to Quit Pinin' and commuted with friends until the school term ended.

In September 1943 Sylvia had to give up her dream of a twenty-room mansion because of gas rationing and a reduced

Carmyn posing at Quit Pinin' in her feedsack shortsuit made in U of A home economics class, March 1942 (Courtesy Carmyn Pitts).

work force—two sons were in the service, one had married, and two were in college—and the family moved to the Keeshin place, east of Rogers, where Tom had found free rent by raising chickens for the owner. The front bedroom was reserved for the owner, but Tom's family had the rest of the house including a real bathroom with running water.

Since Carmyn and her next younger sister, Joy, were determined to continue their college education, they rented a bedroom at 517 West Maple, where they used a hot plate to cook and shared a bath with the owner, Mrs. Alfred Henbest. They returned to the Keeshin place each weekend. Then in January Tomazine's husband, Randall Reeves, went into the navy, leaving his wife and two young sons to rent a home at 413 Vandeventer in Fayetteville. Carmyn and her sister moved in with her.

They moved to a larger house at 615 Oakland Street, Fayetteville, but then only Joy stayed at the house while the Tomazine, her two sons, and Carmyn went for a brief spell to Chicago, where Sis's husband was stationed. They rented a half-basement apartment in an old brick three-story house, but Carmyn only lasted two weeks with a restaurant job before returning to the Oakland Street house.

She attended summer school and got an emergency certificate to teach school that fall in Lincoln, Arkansas, where she found room and board with a Mrs. Young and her granddaughter, Jewell Dean McConnell, at 123 West Street. There was only an outside toilet, and Carmyn had to bathe in a No. 2 zinc tub in the kitchen.

Meanwhile, the Keeshin place had not worked out, so the money left from the sale of Quit Pinin' and the Chevy car was enough for a down payment on a house in Fayetteville, located on what was then called University Farm Road (now North Garland). They called it the Rock House. It sits facing west, where Deane Street joins Garland. Carmyn helped move the family during

Christmas vacation, 1944. Joy, Una May, Sula Jo, and Carmyn had beds in the sunroom, and Tomazine and her boys had the back bedroom. Durward stayed in a tiny bedroom off the closed-in breakfast porch, and the youngest sibling, Thurston, stayed in the parents' bedroom.

The Rock House had a bathroom, big living room with fireplace, and a fine dining room and kitchen, plus a full basement where the coal furnace sent heat to every room! When Tom's job at the Rogers chicken-dressing plant played out, he went to work at a turkey-dressing plant in Klammath Falls, Oregon. That spring Tomazine convinced Durward and Carmyn to accompany her and her two small sons, Zane and Timothy, to accompany her to San Diego, where she would see Randall off to sea. They planned to work in the war factories, but no children were allowed in any of the apartments, and they were forced to stay with Randall's aunt in San Diego and then another aunt in Los Angeles until they could collect enough gas ration stamps to return to Arkansas and the Rock House.

On July 6, 1945, Carmyn married Floyd D. Pitts. Floyd was the middle child of five children born to Charles William and Nora West Pitts of Cane Hill. They took up residence in San Diego, first in a bedroom of a rooming house and then in a bedroom in a house on Coronado Island where he was stationed. That fall Floyd was shipped out to China, and Carmyn returned to the Rock House.

Following Floyd's discharge from the navy in January 1946, he took Carmyn with him to the University of Iowa, where he pursued his master's degree in music. They lived for a time in a bedroom for $1 per day. Later they found another bedroom with kitchen privileges in exchange for Carmyn's household work cooking, ironing, and cleaning.

In August 1946 Floyd had completed his degree and they

returned to Rogers, where he took up his pre-war job as band director. Houses were still scarce, and they rented an upstairs bedroom in a nice old home on the corner of Third and Maple until they found an upstairs apartment at the Boydston place. Carmyn's older brother Douglas and his new wife, Charlene Flowers, lived with them until they found a new home on Dixieland Road. Finally, Carmyn and Floyd rented their first house, the Looney place.

Then another of Carmyn's older brothers, Graydon, left to work in California, leaving his wife, Ruth Henman, child, Gayla, and another baby on the way in their new house in Rogers Heights in the northwest part of town. But they were having trouble making the payments, so Carmyn and Floyd moved in with them while Floyd, his father and his brother Noah worked to build a house on South Sixth Street. Carmyn and Floyd moved in during the fall of 1947, just months before they welcomed their first child, Denele.

Within a couple of years, a larger band directing job beckoned, and Floyd moved his new family to Fort Smith, where he made a name for himself with the Grizzly band, including the invitation to march the band in Eisenhower's inaugural parade. The family first lived at 2412 North 32nd Street, then at 3701 North "O", then 1305 North 37th, where a second daughter, Lisa, was born in 1951.

Carmyn's father died in 1954 and Sylvia and Thurston came to stay at Carmyn and Floyd's new three-bedroom home at 2828 South Houston, Fort Smith. But the tiny lot on a rough and rocky hillside offered no garden space, so for $4,000 they purchased a one-acre lot with an old fixer-upper house at 1813 South Boston. Carmyn taught school to help with expenses, and Floyd supplemented his band-directing income by playing piano in local dance bands. They set out fruit trees and bought a freezer for the

crops of corn, kept rabbits and chickens, and produced their third child, Tom.

But the income was still not enough, so Floyd accepted a better-paying position teaching band at Miami, Oklahoma. They moved from one rent house to another until they bought five acres of land south of town and built a new home, a place where Denele's pet goats could have pasture and where Carmyn could put in a big organic garden. Carmyn gave birth to their fourth child, Sam.

Finally, after the stress of his job undermined his health and a tornado peeled off the roof of the house and wrecked the outbuildings, Floyd and Carmyn decided to move back to Arkansas where their aging parents lived. In 1967 they purchased a house at 709 North Sang in Fayetteville for $16,500. Their fifth child, Peri, was born there, and, in a tone of disbelief, Carmyn notes that she has lived in one place for the last thirty-five years.

REVISITING A ONE-ROOM SCHOOL ON THE OZARK PLATEAU: COON CREEK AKA PLEASANT VIEW #9

JULIA POIROT THOMA

Cautiously we drove down the gravel road and through the creek looking hopefully for a glimpse of the old school house. Then there it was, but what a sight—paint peeling, shingles missing, the stubble end of hay bales poking through the broken windows, the big cast-iron bell fallen from the tower and lying under the oak tree taking the porch roof down with it. The girls' privy was overgrown with blackberry bushes, and poison ivy was twisted around the pump handle. The coal shed was a pile of scrap lumber.

The one-room white clapboard building once stood in good repair between the north and south branches of Coon Creek. It was the seat of learning for that small corner of Lawrence County, Missouri, as well as the gathering place for holiday celebrations and pie suppers.

The fall pie supper was the fund raiser for the year. We school kids would put on a program, usually a short play, some readings, and a few songs. For several weeks beforehand we would sell chances for drawings. The prizes were usually blankets, tools, or kitchen utensils. Individual pieces of pie and cake were auctioned off to the highest bidder. But the highlight of

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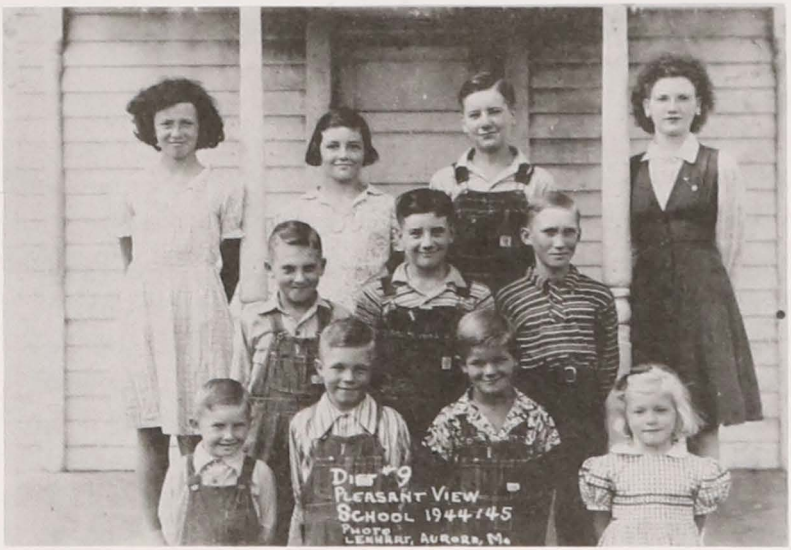
Julia Poirot Thoma has been a resident of Washington County for almost forty years. She wrote this memoir for her children. She wishes to thank Rebecca Newth for her helpful suggestions. The editor feels her experiences are similar to those of Washington County children who attended one of the many one-room schools.



Students and their teacher, Pleasant View School, Lawrence County, Missouri 1944–45 (Courtesy author).

the evening was the auctioning of the girls' pie boxes. These boxes were richly decorated with crepe paper flowers, ribbons and cutouts. Inside were lunch and pie for two. Whoever bought the box could go someplace quiet and eat the lunch with the girl. Of course the owner of the box was kept a big secret, so the buyer never knew whose box he was buying. If a girl had a sweetie, she would try to send some secret signals when her box was being auctioned. Monday morning after the pie supper was always a day to clean up the remains of the festivities. There was much giggling, whispering and teasing about who forgot their lines, who bought the pie boxes, and just who was spotted out beyond the glow of the yard lanterns.

Most days were pretty routine, however. The big boys would bring in two or three buckets of coal to burn in the big black potbellied stove. The younger ones would carry in a couple of

buckets of water from the well. One was for drinking, the other for hand washing. Hand washing required two people, one to pour water, using the gourd dipper, over the other's hands. We each had our own tin drinking cup, which hung on a peg over the buckets.

First thing every morning was health check. The health monitor would walk around to every one and ask, "Did you brush your teeth, wash your hands and face, clean your fingernails, and bring a clean hanky?" (Kleenex hadn't been invented.) I don't remember reciting the pledge to the flag, but we did have to have a Bible verse memorized every Monday morning. A. J. always had the same verse, "Jesus wept."

Everyone carried lunch in a pail. In cold weather we could put a jar of soup or cocoa in the water pan on top of the stove to heat. That was the extent of our hot lunch program. At noon a fair amount of trading sandwiches, cookies, and fruit always made the menu a bit more interesting. Many times my sister tried to get her friend Annalee to trade sandwiches with her. Finally one day she very reluctantly did trade. Her sandwich was made of mustard on a piece of white bread. We always felt sad that Annalee felt compelled to trade and reveal just how very poor her family was.

Of course there were some embarrassing situations for the rest of us, too. Often someone would fall in the creek or in slushy snow on the way to school. Then they would have to take off their socks and underwear and hang them up by the stove to dry. In order to let the teacher know we had to make a trip down to the privy we would hold up one or two fingers depending on how long we expected to stay. Sometimes a child would wait too long to hold up an index finger to let the teacher know that she had to go. The resulting accident meant her panties would hang by the stove to dry.

I think, often, the older students taught the younger ones. We did learn to read, write, and do math. We studied history, science,

did a lot of art projects, had a rhythm band, and learned some songs. All envied the favored few who played the triangle in the band.

Recess was an hour long, just after lunch. We played Flying Dutchman, Drop the Handkerchief, Kick the Picket, Annie Over, and Fox and Geese. We would often play the same game for weeks on end. The year I was the only girl, I played football all year! Our games seldom led to disagreements, conflicts, or fights.

One of my best memories is of becoming a Missouri Nature Knight. I still have the brass pin in the shape of the state with a knight's helmet on top where Iowa should be. In order to become a Nature Knight I had to collect and identify a lot of leaves, flowers, birds' nests and animal tracks.

A whole lot of learning happened going to and from school, and a lot took place around the dining table at home. One of my father's sayings was, "Don't ever let schooling interfere with your education." We certainly lived that motto growing up on the prairie. Walking the mile to and from school we would follow a cow path to avoid soaking our shoes and socks in the early morning dew. Sometimes the cows would still be sleeping, and we'd stop to soak up some warmth from the ground where they had lain. More often however, they would stop grazing and gather in a bunch as if to charge us. Usually if we ignored them they would soon saunter away. Over on the east end of the prairie, a Jersey bull would watch for us and come charging up to the fence, then follow along beside us pawing up the dust. We always tried to give him plenty of room. Fortunately the "bobbed wire" fence was strong and tightly strung.

In winter, instead of going across the prairie, we would often follow the creek. If it was frozen we would skate to school. In spring after a big rain it was always a challenge to find the best place to cross over. Many times we had to walk two or three miles via the road to cross at one of the few bridges. If a really big "toad

strangler" came during school hours, Mr. Plummer, who lived close by, would take all the kids across in his big box wagon.

I know why the school was called Coon Creek. Many hours were spent catching frogs and tadpoles or watching a raccoon scamper along the bank looking for crawdads. The swinging foot bridge provided a stage for dramatic play and not a few dunkings when the boys would sneak up and give it a shake as we girls were crossing. What I never knew is why the school was officially named Pleasant View #9, as if all we ever did was sit and look out the windows.

Flash Back
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